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Three Oaks celebrates Flag Day 2026 **PAGES 10-11**

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FOR New Buffalo Township and City
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FRIENDS OF BERRIEN COUNTY TRAILS LAUNCHES ‘BIG IDEA’

— PAGE 18 —

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Village council hears of increased rates for fiscal year

PASSES ORDINANCE FORMALIZING SALE OF VILLAGE-OWNED LOT

BY THERESE DONNELLY

As the 2025-2026 fiscal year nears an end, the Three Oaks Village Council held a truth in taxation hearing during their June 10 regular meeting.

Such hearings are legally required before a municipality can make changes to property tax revenues and Village Manager Dan Faulkner explained the village holds one every year to adjust millage rates to match inflation and changes in taxable property values.

The new rates going into the 2026-2027 fiscal year will increase, bringing the general fund to 7.8595 mills and the street fund to 3.1346 mills.

The council tabled a decision on sidewalk improvements along Cherry Street between Sycamore and Butternut streets to get contractor estimates.

After months of assessments and deliberation, the council passed an ordinance to formalize the sale of a village-owned lot at 112 N. Elm Street to Brigget and Tad Verdun for $72,500. The Verduns had approached the village about purchasing the lot, which had been used for public parking. At the time, they pointed out the lot was only accessible by encroaching on their adjacent property, and the lot is unbuildable due to zoning ordinances.

The council also approved the formation of a sewer-water committee with Faulkner and councilmembers Lois Jones, Mike Springer and Steve Graziano.

Tom Pauly formally resigned from the Downtown Development Authority and Mike Holfels resigned from the Public Service Committee.

During public comments, Jennifer Fields, candidate for 5th District judge, introduced herself to the council. Fields is an assistant public defender for Berrien County and told the council she is a lifelong county resident.

Faulkner told the council that work on the Hickory Street bridge is on schedule and sidewalk work is expected to begin soon. He said there will be some legal work required, as the sidewalk is on an easement, but he did not expect any delays.

Springer informed the council that work on the Carver Park gazebo was finished in time for Flag Day celebrations in the village. He added that the Parks and Recreation Board is looking to install paved walkways in the park to provide better accessibility.

Faulkner also told the council the village currently employs David Grosse as an ordinance enforcement officer but would need to be designated as an ordinance officer to write tickets for violations. Faulkner said currently all citations are issued by the village police department.

Village Treasurer Tracy Jones recently completed a class on Michigan Certified Assessing Technician (MCAT) certification and passed the final test. Faulkner said Jones will be able to assess personal property taxes.

Besides its near-ubiquitous Michelin-star food, sun-kissed weather, breathtaking mountain bay views, and a daily swim in the Mediterranean— Greece boasts some of the quietest nature on Earth.
—Dino N. Fatouros

Local Government Meetings

New Buffalo Times

Democracy Requires Transparency

CITY OF NEW BUFFALO
VANCE PRICE, MAYOR
CITY COUNCIL
MARK ROBERTSON, ROGER LIJEWSKI, KAREN GEAR, RICH KNOLL, VANCE PRICE
City Council meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30PM
CITY OF NEW BUFFALO PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 5:30PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP BOARD
HOWARD MALES, MICHELLE HEIT, MICHELLE HANNON, PATTY IAZZETTO, BARBARA ANDERSON
Board meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 4PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:30PM
SHERIFF BERRIEN COUNTY
Sheriff, Chuck Heit
Undersheriff, Greg Sanders
NEW BUFFALO AREA RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
Meets at 9AM on the 2nd Wednesday of every other month (odd) at New Buffalo Township Hall, 17425 Red Arrow Highway New Buffalo
NEW BUFFALO AREA SCHOOLS BOARD
LISA WERNER, JOHN HASKINS, DENISE CHURCHILL, JENNIFER SUMMERS, VANESSA THUN, STEPHEN DONNELLY, GREG VOSBERG
The Board meets on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 6PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP BOARD
DAVID BUNTE, PAULA DUDIAK, LIZ RETTIG, RICHARD SULLIVAN, ARTHUR ANDERSON
Chikaming Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30PM
THREE OAKS
THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7PM
VILLAGE OF THREE OAKS BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7PM
GRAND BEACH
Meets on the 3rd Wednesday at 5PM EST
KIMBERLY WOLNIK, CLERK-TREASURER
HARRY WALDER, JACK GRACE, ED SEBASTIAN, PETER DOERR, EDWARD BRANDES
MICHIANA
VILLAGE OF MICHIANA COUNCIL
Meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 1PM

City council approves budget amendments

BY THERESE DONNELLY

As part of their June 15 meeting, the New Buffalo City Council approved amendments to the 2025-2026 city budget.

City Manager Darwin Watson explained budget amendments are a part of municipalities' annual budgets to make adjustments for operating costs that did not match expected totals. Budget amendments are required to comply with the State of Michigan Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act, which requires local governments to balance annual budgets by adjusting for any unexpected revenues or expenses before the end of the fiscal year.

In another annual action, the council approved an updated master fee schedule, effective July 1. This year's fee schedule will include a new $200 fee for minor site plan amendments. Watson told the council fees are intended to cover the costs of operations, including administrative costs, and not bring in revenue for the city.

Before voting, council member Rich Knoll asked about the mention of fees for sexually oriented businesses. Watson explained that city zoning would make it "extremely hard" for business of such nature to open in the city, but it would be difficult to remove as an existing piece of the ordinance.

In a separate action, the council approved the fire service agreement with New Buffalo Township. The city council held a special meeting in April to explore options to address the city's limited fire staff before resolving during their regular meeting later that month to negotiate an agreement with the township.

The Planning Commission reviewed and recommended the council approve a site plan for Kyle Covert at 22 S. Townsend for the construction of a garage on the residential property.

Two separate groups received approval for special events.

Kilometers for Kiki, a 5K fundraiser to support brain aneurysm awareness and research, will take place Sept. 12, from 9:30 a.m. to noon. The council's approval includes a potential closing of a portion of West Merchant Street from Whittaker to Barton during the run.

Tour de LaPorte, a walk/run/bike event to benefit the LaPorte County Family YMCA, requested to use Oselka Park as a stop along its cycling event Aug. 23.

The council approved a quote from West Shore Services to remove the community warning siren at the City Fire Department building at 35 N. Harrison St. The total cost is $2,500 for the removal, but Watson told the council that West Shore will provide a $4,500 trade-in credit.

In November, the city sent the beach rake to Kassbohrer All-Terrain Vehicles, Inc for repairs and maintenance, and instructed the company to provide a quote before performing any work. Instead, Kassbohrer did work on the rake and presented the city with an invoice for $13,937.65.

On Watson's recommendation, the council voted to pay the invoice.

The rake is towed behind a tractor or other heavy vehicle to collect debris from the public beach.

The Water Department has determined the waterline at the city beach needs to be replaced. On Watson's recommendation the council approved a bid from Burkholder Excavating to install the new line.

Burkholder will bore into the path for the new line to avoid disturbing the public parking lot during work in the summer months.

The council also approved work on the storm sewer washout at Michigan and Smith streets. Watson said the city engineering firm and city staff reviewed bids from three companies and recommended Meeks Construction's bid for $35,700.

Watson told the council there will be some legal issues that need to be settled before work begins, as the drain is located on private property.

The council had a first reading on an ordinance to amend portions of zoning ordinance article 8. Current city ordinances require all site plans be recommended by the Planning Commission and approve by the city council. Under the proposed amendment, by-right site plans, which comply fully with existing zoning codes, could be approved by the Commission. This would reduce the time applicants wait to receive approval before work can begin.

The council approved a hawking and peddling permit request from Melanie Credo, doing business under the company name Alsie, to sell pre-packaged ice cream at 20 Landings Road on July 2 and 3. Councilmember Mark Roberton noted Alsie would be operating on private property.

Man only likes to count his troubles, but he does not count his joys.
— Fyodor Dostoevsky

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Township approves Corridor Improvement Authority extension

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

After a rescheduled public hearing, members of the New Buffalo Township Board adopted a resolution that amends the Corridor Improvement Plan to extend it another 10 years until March 21, 2036, at their Monday, June 15, meeting.

In a statement, Township Supervisor Michelle Heit said in 2025, the "taxable value within the Corridor Improvement Authority district increased by $2,905,652, resulting in a tax increment capture of $13,853.67, from the county and $1,057.88 from the township." Since being established in 2016, the Authority has captured a total of $17,246 in tax increment revenues. "

"After several years of limited activity, the township is beginning to see the benefits of increased investment and development interest in the Exit One and Exit Four corridors," Heit said, adding that the township "captures 100% of the increase from the county's operation millage and 100% of the increase to the township's operating millage."

Board members approved 2025-2026 budget amendments and adopted a resolution adopting the 2026-2027 budget and millages.

Total revenues are $10,216,405 and total expenses are $10,099,758, with Heit saying that a key highlight from the General Fund is the extra $38,000 for an additional summer deputy that's being funded by some of township's marijuana funds. Another big budget item is a possible addition or changes to Fire Station One. Heit said that they're moving the $500,000 that was allocated toward the nonmotorized path on Harbor Country Drive from this year's current budget to the 2026-2027 budget to address that station's needs, as the path won't happen until the following fiscal year.

The general operating millage is .3632 mill, park millage is .3496 mill, and the Public Safety Special Assessment is 2.1 mills.

Board members adopted a resolution establishing township officers' salaries at $61,000 for supervisor, clerk and treasurer, effective July 1.

Board members approved a proposal from TowerPinkster for $25,000 for long range facility planning services as well as engineering, architectural and construction administration services for the Clay Street Fire Station One and Utility Department and Addition Project at a fee of 7 percent of the total cost.

TowerPinkster Senior Project Manager Mike Galovan said the proposal covers two projects: A possible long-range plan, which would involve talking to different departments to see where the township is going in the next 10 years and putting data into a report and a possible addition, or some remodeling, to Fire Station One.

Heit said the building currently mainly houses the water department but also park equipment and the fire department.

A proposal from Skillman to provide construction management services for Clay Street Fire Station One Utility Department Building Addition Project at a fee of 3.5 percent of the total cost was approved.

A final payment for Fire Truck 1323 for $721,053 to Rosenbauer Minnesota LLC was approved.

The board approved the township approved agreement with the New Buffalo City and the township to provide contractual fire services to the city for 10 years.

A resolution stating the township opposes any redesignation, reduction, removal or weakening of critical dune area designations in the township was adopted.

Board members approved outdoor assembly permits for the following adult use marijuana retail establishments: Supergood at 18910 Harbor Country Drive from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. July 3 and 4; Supergood at 13992 Grand Avenue from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. July 3 and 4; Urb from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. July 3; 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Aug. 29 and 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. April 20, 2027; Kush E Mart from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. July 10; Trapperz Alley from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. July 11; King of Budz from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Aug. 14 and 15, to approve a permit for three of four dates (Sept. 4, 5, 6 and 7) from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Oct. 29, 30 and 31.

Final approval of an SLU was granted to the following to operate adult use marijuana retail establishments: NBT Partners LLC at 19317 U.S. Highway 12; PER IV LLC (doing business as Weed Mart) at 13944 Grand Avenue, on the condition that, in order to open, the applicant must obtain drain commissioner's approval of stormwater plan and a soil erosion permit and any work required by the drain commissioner is completed and inspected; and 19325 U.S. Highway 12 LLC.

In a statement after the meeting, Heit said that Harbor Country Drive is back on the Berrien County Road Department's 2026 schedule after asking if something can be worked out at the Berrien County Board of Commissioners' meeting last month.

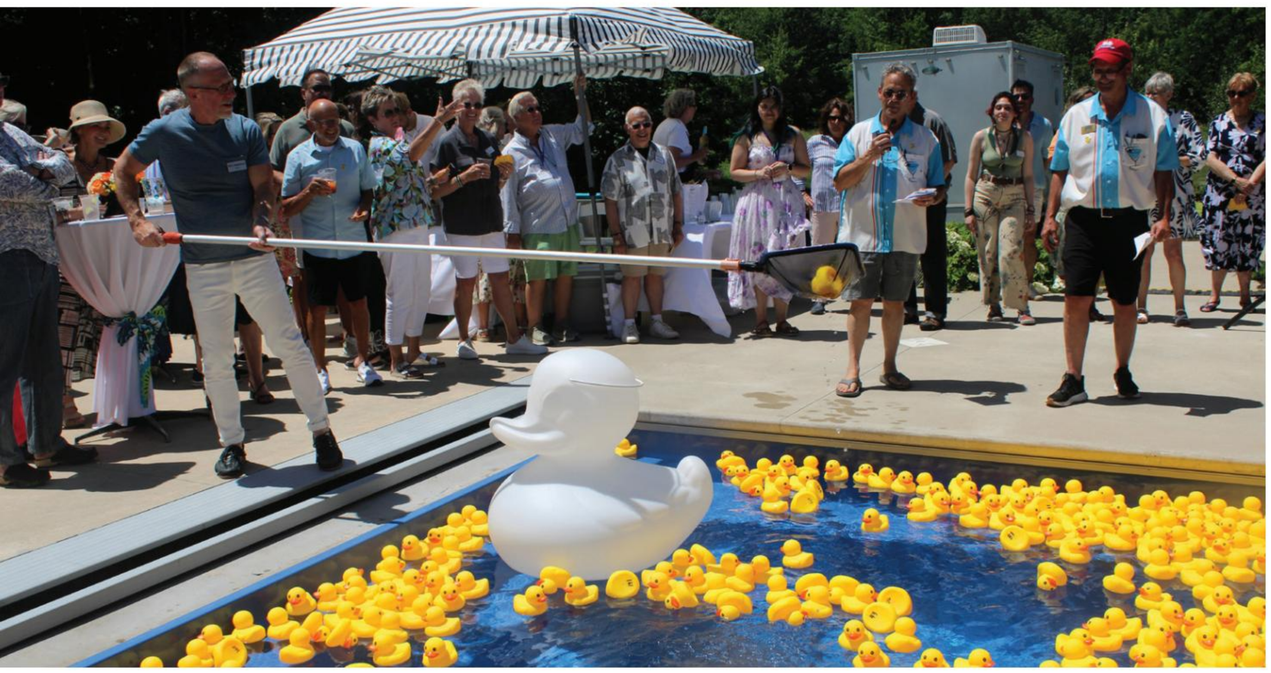
Heit said that an agreement hasn't been sent; however, her guess is that the township will pay for the work this year and get a credit for it next year, but she's also heard that the county may be giving the Road Department funds.

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

Lynn and Allen Turner speak at the annual brunch

Executive Director Bob Murphy welcomes the crowd

Richard Clark with Megan App



Kirk Amptmeyer pulls ducks during the Duck Prize Raffle

Mary Beth and Bob Flannery with Leslie Craigie and John Henke

Neighbor By Neighbor receives financial boost at annual brunch

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Neighbor By Neighbor has received a financial boost toward helping low-income neighbors gain tools and education to progress from dependence to independence.

Longtime southwest Michigan residents and community supporters Allen and Lynn Turner announced they're giving Neighbor by Neighbor $100,000 at the organization's fourth annual Founder's Day Brunch at the Three Oaks home of Gary Allen and Kirk Amptmeyer Saturday, June 13.

"You would think we know a lot and we know many of you, but we don't know everything and what we've learned recently in the last few years and with (Neighbor By Neighbor Executive Director) Bob Murphy's help has inspired us to want to be helpful ourselves," Allen said.

As children of immigrants themselves, Allen said he and Lynn "understand what it means to be different."

"We hope this helps, we hope you will all help too - these people are our neighbors and maybe, someday, our friends," he said.

A Union Pier-based nonprofit 501c3 organization, Neighbor by Neighbor addresses food insecurities, homelessness, and the dire needs of the vulnerable seniors and disabled individuals,

In about a month, Murphy said they'll be launching a new website that will tell the "incredibly compelling" stories of volunteers, supporters and those whom the organization has helped get back on their feet and reclaim their lives.

There's "Phillip," who, when asked if he wanted to participate in a photoshoot for the new website, said "Neighbor by Neighbor saved my life, I would do anything." Also featured is Marcie, a board member and client.

"You won't find a more powerful, resourceful person than Marcie in terms of what she's had to deal with in her life and how she's just come out as an absolutely great person," Murphy said.

Senior case manager Allyson White has met people "during some of the hardest moments of their lives."

"Many come to us feeling overwhelmed, isolated and nowhere left to turn," White said.

White said Neighbor by Neighbor does more than assist clients with practical necessities, such as utility bills, groceries and rent.

"Every day, the people we serve see that they're supported, they see we're a community that lifts each other up and in world where it's easy to feel forgotten, we're sending a different message: We're telling people they're seen, that they matter and they don't have to face difficult times alone," White said.

"What inspires me every day is what it says about this community: That when one of our neighbors is struggling, we don't look away – we show up for each other," White added.

Guests at the brunch could bid on a variety of live auction packages, as well as try their luck at winning a top prize at a Duck Raffle (with rubber ducks being pulled from the back patio pool). The Turners' $100,000 kicked off the "Raise the Paddle" portion, where guests made a straight cash donation to the organization, with the goal of raising $200,000.

The next major Neighbor by Neighbor event will be "Up on a Hill," a fall music festival that will be at 19-acre Apple Blossom Resort in New Buffalo in September. More information can be found at www.uponahill.com.

For more on Neighbor by Neighbor, visit www.neighborbyneighbor.org.

A HISTORIC STRUCTURE IN LAPORTE IS BEING TORN DOWN

The old Coca Cola bottling plant on Rumely St. started being demolished on Monday, June 8.

Originally, the structure was going to be remodeled into housing for people transitioning from homelessness under plans approved by the city in 2023.

Now, a new structure for the same purpose is going to replace it.

Tucker King, Assistant Director of Engineering for the city, said the plans changed after health risks and other issues related to the structure were discovered.

"The glazed brick on the interior was all lead-based glaze. There was a lot of asbestos, and the roof was failing in multiple parts," he said.

King said the cost of addressing the issues during a remodeling turned out to be more expensive than new construction.

King said the tear down is expected to take a few weeks while construction of the new facility will take about one year to complete.

The developer obtained a $7.5 million state grant to entirely cover the cost of construction.

Sixteen one and two bedroom units are planned with monthly rent covering utilities and Wi-Fi based on 30 percent of an individual's gross income.

The rent will be subsidized with separate, ongoing grants from the state. — SYAN MADDUX

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE New Buffalo Times — SINCE 1942

Damage extensive from tornado outbreak

BY STAN MADDUX

Tornadoes caused extensive damage throughout parts of northern Indiana last week but a home at a farm was left practically unscathed despite a twister passing within a stone's throw from the residence.

Ed Malecki along with his wife and three children were huddled together in the basement of their home near LaCrosse during the Thursday night storms.

Malecki, who raises corn and soybeans, said he was at his doorstep for about five minutes watching the tornado coming in his direction from Kouts before he and his family went downstairs.

"It just kept coming directly toward us," he said.

About two minutes later, they could tell the tornado was very close by the popping in their ears from the change in air pressure caused by the twister.

Malecki said things were pretty quiet except for a "little whistling of the wind" and sound of the house "creaking" just a bit as the tornado passed by.

Once their ears stopped popping, Malecki said he went upstairs and looked out a window to watch the departing tornado continue on to the east.

"It was pretty crazy," he said.

An aerial photo clearly shows the tornado cut a path across Malecki's farm field before passing within about 100 feet from the residence.

He said the only structure damage was from a board picked up by the winds impaling the side of the house.

There was extensive damage outside the home to his solar panels, irrigation system and a garage door along with his young corn and soybeans plants traveled over by the tornado.

A farming couple on the other side of his field, Alan and Majella Werner, were not so lucky.

"It took their whole farm. Everything is gone," Malecki said.

Malecki said he went over and assisted the man and woman out of their basement after receiving their text messages to come help.

Much of their house, grain silos and outbuildings like debris were blown into nearby fields.

"The whole house was just completely gone. It was gone," said LaPorte County Emergency Management Coordinator Rob Sabie.

He said the Werners were not injured.

Aaron Hanna along with his wife and five children had their nearby house heavily damaged and farm animals killed by the same tornado.

Hanna said all but one of his 19 chickens along with a duck perished.

Three sheep and a steer his 10-year-old son, Derek, shows in 4-H survived.

Hanna, a full-time truck driver, said they all took cover in the utility room of their basement as the tornado approached from the west.

He went back outside one more time to see where the tornado was and since it was still heading in their direction he returned to the basement as the twister passed seemingly between his house and shop, which are about 100 feet from each other.

"It just looked huge," he said.

His semi-truck was moved about 25 feet from where he had parked it and was on its side.

Cass-Clinton Township Fire Chief Jeff Mitzner said well over a dozen homes were heavily damaged or destroyed by falling trees in the Wanatah area.

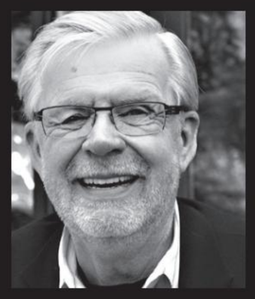
He didn't see a tornado actually touch down but spotted multiple funnel clouds emerge from the sky at the same time while outside his home.

"We could see the tails coming down. Up and down," he said.

According to NIPSCO, there were over 80,000 customers without power because of the storms throughout its northern Indiana service territory.

From the Bleachers

COLUMN BY KURT MARGGRAF IN CHICAGO



I once had a great friend who loved sports as much, if not more, than I did.

We both loved the Bears, Bulls, and Blackhawks, but when it came to baseball, we traveled down different paths. Jimmy was a White Sox fan who had a strong dislike for the Yankees and Cubs, and I was a Cub fan who disliked the Mets and Sox, and although we would give each other the business about our teams, it was always good natured.

When the White Sox won the World Series in 2005, I put my dislike of the team aside and actually rooted for them because it was so important to my friends. Eleven years later, in 2016, the Cubs won the series and my friends returned the favor. The Sox drought was 88 years and the Cubs was 108.

The reason I bring up these long dry spells for Chicago's baseball teams is to compare them with the New York Knicks, who won the NBA championship for the first time in 53 years.

Even though the Knicks are among my least favorite teams, I have to give them credit. They had a really good season, got hot in the playoffs, and dominated some really good teams. The teams ability to come from behind to win games was really impressive.

While I applaud the team, their fans left a lot to be desired. I'm going to leave the President's visit out of it, because this column isn't a place for politics, but the booing he received was amusing. I'll also leave the A-listers alone, because for the most part, they have suffered just like the other fans.

The fans who acted like hoodlums after the games are the ones I'm talking about.

I saw a group savagely attack a young man just because he was wearing a San Antonio Spurs jersey, and another group attack a worker at a 5 guys hamburger joint just because he said he was a Spurs fan. I'm aware that only a small percentage of fans were misbehaving, but it was so pointless.

They were in the middle of winning a championship, something that hadn't been done in the offender's lifetime. Why not just celebrate and enjoy the moment like the vast majority of your fellow fans.

Twenty eight years ago, the Bulls won their last championship, and I surely don't remember our city's fans acting so badly. The world is different now, but sports fans should behave with joy when their team wins so that the spotlight is on the team, not the fans.

While thinking about New York, I realized something. Historically, the Yankees have dominated baseball, and it seems like New Yorkers puff up their chests and feel superior because their team is so good. Hockey, football, and until this year, basketball are different stories.

Baseball, so far, doesn't have a salary cap and until they do the Yankees, like the Dodgers, will be able to outspend the opposition, giving them the edge. Jimmy, the White Sox are really good this year,

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

Be kind. Talk to you next week. Peace, love, and happiness.

My mentality is my biggest strength.
— Jalen Brunson

Chikaming Township to cut ribbon on new amenities, trail connection at Harbert Community Park

Chikaming Township invites residents and visitors to join in Unveiled: A Harbert Community Park Celebration, a ribbon-cutting event recognizing major improvements to Harbert Community Park and celebrating the connections that bring Harbor Country communities together, at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, June 27, at 4:30 p.m. at Harbert Community Park.

The event will be followed by the kickoff of the park's popular summer concert series. Community members are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets, enjoy live music, a food truck, and help celebrate the newest additions to this beloved community gathering space. Complimentary iced tea and cake pops will be available for the first 30 attendees.

Following the ribbon cutting, guests are invited to stay and enjoy an evening of free entertainment. The summer concert series will feature the Weko Boys at 5:30 p.m. and PT & The Cruisers at 7 p.m. Cousins Maine Lobster will be on site serving food, and attendees are welcome to bring a picnic dinner.

Recent improvements to Harbert Community Park include new pickleball courts, a public restroom facility, ADA-accessible pathways, a trailhead connection to the Red Arrow Linear Park, native landscaping and pollinator plantings, and additional storage facilities to support park operations.

The project was made possible through an $878,700 Michigan Department of Natural Resources ARPA Spark Grant, along with a 10 percent local match from Chikaming Township. The improvements were designed by local architect John Chipman and engineering firm Abonmarche. It reflects the community's vision for creating welcoming, accessible recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages.

The new trailhead connection strengthens access to the Red Arrow Linear Park, a regional trail system that links communities throughout Harbor Country and provides opportunities for walking, biking, recreation, and exploration.

The enhancements extend beyond recreation and accessibility. Through the Township's Parks Ambassadors program, volunteers have been helping establish native plantings and pollinator-friendly landscapes throughout the park. The program has attracted renewed interest from community members eager to support the stewardship and beautification of Chikaming Township's parks and public spaces.

"This project represents much more than new amenities," said David Bunte, Chikaming Township supervisor. "This investment reflects our community's vision for creating accessible, welcoming spaces where residents and visitors can connect, stay active, and enjoy the natural beauty of Harbor Country. We are grateful for the support of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources through the ARPA Spark Grant program, as well as the many local partners, volunteers, and community members whose collaboration helped bring this project to life."

The event also coincides with Celebrate Red Arrow Trail Days, a regional initiative highlighting the trail network connecting communities from Sawyer to New Buffalo and encouraging residents and visitors to experience Harbor Country by foot or bicycle.

"One of the most rewarding parts of this project has been seeing how quickly people have embraced these new amenities," said Joe Martin, Chikaming Township parks director. "From pickleball players and dog park visitors to cyclists and walkers using the Red Arrow Trail connection, the park is bringing together people of all ages and interests. These improvements have expanded opportunities for recreation while making the park a more welcoming destination for residents and visitors."

For more information, visit www.chikamingtownship.org or contact Chikaming Township.

A Drier's car rides in the parade

Pet Parade winner Ladybug smiles at the paradegoers

An endless stream of tractors was featured

Flag Day Prince and Princess Trey Peters and Lillian Stark

The Lest We Forget unit rides in the parade

Berrien County Shrine Club Mini Bike Patrol rides in the parade

Berrien County Sheriff's Office Motorcycle Unit kicks off festivities

American Legion Post 204 Color Guard march down Elm

Youth sports teams were part of the action

Stroll Three Oaks displays a flag for its Flag Day Project

Three Oaks celebrates Flag Day 2026

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

A spirit of tradition permeated downtown Three Oaks during the 74th annual Flag Day Parade Sunday, June 14.

Billed as "World's Largest Flag Day Parade," the over 100-unit parade draws locals and visitors to Elm Street.

This year's parade kicked off with the traditional Harley Davidson Road King Police Motorcycles from the Berrien County Sheriff's Office Motorcycle Unit. Other units were the Three Oaks American Legion Post 204 Color Guard; the parade's grand marshal, Bill Donner, who was born and raised in Three Oaks and spent his life farming the land with his family, serving in the National Guard as a tank driver and serving decades of leadership as township trustee and supervisor; Miss/Mr. Three Oaks/River Valley Royal Court and other local royalties; area law enforcement agencies and the usual endless stream of tractors and antique cars.

Michiana Clowns entertain

Grand Marshal Bill Donner and wife Barb waves to the crowd

Michigan City Soul Steppers Drill Team performs

River Valley Marching Mustangs march down Elm Street

The New Buffalo Royal Court waves to the crowd

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What's Happening, Hillary?

YOUR CURATED GUIDE TO THE BEST IN NEW BUFFALO, AND BEYOND!

JUNE 18, THURSDAY:
- Crafted Cocktails – Michigan Style Cocktail Class at Local Pour | Sawyer | 6-7:30PM [Tickets]
- Dig the Dunes Beer Run & Wine Walk Series at Round Barn Tasting Room | Union Pier | 7PM [Tickets]
- Drag Bingo at the Acorn | Three Oaks | 7PM [Tickets]
- Country Line Dancing by Sunset Coast at Kankakee Live-Four Winds Casino | New Buffalo | 7:30PM [Free]

JUNE 19, FRIDAY:
- Yoga at Lavender Bliss Flower Farm | Bridgman | 9AM [Registration Required]
- Michigan City Juneteenth Celebration at the Guy Foreman Ampitheater | 12-8PM CT [Free]
- Juneteenth Celebration with Brothers Dread Live Music | Golden Muse Winery | Baroda | 5-8PM [Free]
- Summer Solstice Sound Healing at Dancing Feet Yoga | New Buffalo | 7PM [Registration Required]
- Live Music at Four Winds Casino at 5PM, Lake Time Brewing & Spirits at 7PM, Sonny D's at 7PM, The Acorn at 8PM, and Live at the Lakefront (Michigan City) at 8PM CT

JUNE 20-21, SATURDAY & SUNDAY:
- Island Spirits Party at Round Barn Estate | Baroda | 11AM-6PM [Cover Charge]

JUNE 20, SATURDAY:
- Tree of Life Macrame Workshop at Sandpiper | Bridgman | 12PM [Registration Required]
- Top 50 2026 Wine Tasting Experience by The Wine Sellers at Timothy's | Union Pier | 1-4PM [Tickets]
- PSYCHFEST at Burn 'Em Brewing | Michigan City | 1-10PM CT [Tickets]
- Live Music at Tabor Hill at 2:30PM, Round Barn Tasting Room at 3PM, Round Barn Brewery at 6PM, Peat's Cider Social at 7PM, Union Pier Social at 7PM, The Acorn at 8PM, Live at the Lakefront in Michigan City at 8PM CT, Four Winds Casino at 10PM

JUNE 21, SUNDAY:
- Father's Day Brunch at Journeyman Distillery | Three Oaks | 11AM-3PM [Tickets]
- Live Music at Red Top Winery at 12PM, Tabor Hill at 2:30PM, Lemon Creek Winery at 3PM, Shoreline Brewery at 3PM CT

JUNE 25, THURSDAY:
- Walk the Gardens: A Floral Watercolor Workshop at Friendship Botanic Gardens | Michigan City | 5PM CT [Tickets]
- Anders Osborne Duo at The Acorn | Three Oaks | 8PM [Tickets]

JUNE 26, FRIDAY:
- Yoga at Lavender Bliss Flower Farm | Bridgman | 9AM [Registration Required]
- Echoes of the Great Migration Documentary & Discussion with PBS at the Public Library | Michigan City | 2PM CT [Free]
- Live Music at Peat's Cider Social 6PM, Red Top Winery 5PM, Lake Time Brewing & Spirits 7PM, Burn 'Em Brewing 7PM CT, The Acorn 8PM, Four Winds Casino 5PM and 10PM
- Grateful Dead Theme Night at Peat's Cider Social | Stevensville | 4-10PM [Free]

JUNE 27, SATURDAY:
- Paddle to the Pier 15-mile Kayak by North Pier Brewing Company | St. Joseph | 8:30AM [Tickets]
- Twin Cities Pride Fest | St. Joseph | 12PM [Free]
- Needle Felting Class for Beginners at The Sandpiper | Bridgman | 1PM [Tickets]
- Live Music at Tabor Hill at 2:30PM, Round Barn Tasting Room at 3PM, Round Barn Estate at 3:30PM, Chill Hill Winery at 5PM, Union Pier Social at 7PM, The Acorn at 8PM, Live at the Lakefront in Michigan City at 8PM CT, Four Winds Casino at 10PM

JUNE 28, SUNDAY:
- Sand Dunes Photography Field Trip by MI Studio Space at Warren Dunes | Sawyer | 1-8PM [Free, RSVP Requested]
- Greens & Screens: Caddyshack at Welter's Folly & Vicker's Theater | Three Oaks | 1:30PM [Tickets]
- Live Music at Round Barn Estate at 2:30, Tabor Hill at 2:30, The Acorn at 8PM, Shoreline Brewery at 3PM CT
- Watercolor Bookmark Workshop at Flourish Books & Plants | New Buffalo | 4PM [Tickets]

JUNE 29, MONDAY:
- Harbor Country Film Group Presents "The American President" at New Buffalo Township Library | 6PM [Free]

JUNE 30, TUESDAY:
- Celebrating 60 years of the Bridgman Public Library | Bridgman | 5:30PM [Free]

A Writer's Life...

DURING THE GOLDEN AGE OF TELEVISION ANIMATION

BY JACK OLESKER

The morning after...

The phrase "I woke in a cold sweat" is a cliché, but there's no other way to put it. My t-shirt and sweats were drenched when I woke at six-thirty. How much of that was a result of the fight-or-flight reaction brought on by my animated cauchemar and how much was because I'd had too much pizza washed down by too many glasses of wine was debatable.

Feeling decidedly loggy, the last thing I needed to hear when I dragged myself into the studio was Lori saying, "We're meeting in the conference room in half an hour. Andy wants to start having creative meetings every Tuesday morning." In passing, it again struck me as odd that Andy was getting so involved with creative affairs.

I felt anything but creative, having expelled a great deal of my creative energy by involuntarily composing my nightmare the evening before. But orders were orders. I slinked to the conference room a couple of minutes before ten to discover the usual suspects gathered. Howard, Bobby, Lisa Maliani, Phil Harnage and an unusually chipper and smiling Mert sat on one side of the long conference table. Andy sat at the head of the table. Robby, Lori, Kevin and Michael Maliani sat on the other side.

We chatted informally for a couple minutes. Finally, it became obvious we were waiting for someone. Then the door opened and a man who would have a profound and enduring impact on my career walked in. His name was Haim Saban.

Despite my being weary from a rough night, I thought the idea of regular creative meetings was a good one. I looked around the conference room and saw a lot of talent. There was only one person I didn't know. Andy introduced Haim as the man who, along with his partner, Shuki Levy, created the music for all of DIC's television series. Shuki was a composer, Haim was a deal maker.

One of the deals Haim made became the stuff of legend. When DIC was getting started as a studio, Haim offered to create the music for all of Jean and Andy's series for free, the only stipulation being Haim would own the ASCAP royalties – i.e., every time a DIC series' theme music or song played, Saban Entertainment would collect a royalty from ASCAP. AI will tell you "At its peak, DIC Entertainment provided about 30% of all Saturday morning network programming and produced an astonishing 60 hours of content per week. This translated to over 3,000 total half-hours of animated programming in their vast library." The deal to produce DIC series music 'for free' made Haim millions.

Physically, Haim was a big man, jet black hair shining from pomade. With his silk shirt, unbuttoned a few buttons too many, and a couple of gold chains around his neck, he looked the textbook definition of a Hollywood producer back in those days.

Haim was brash, outgoing, his smile blinding. But he had this wonderful ability to make people feel they were important. It wasn't pandering. He was just interested in people, interested in seeing if they were worth working with. Even though it was our first time meeting, I felt we clicked. Haim listened to my ideas with genuine interest. Although I didn't know it on that morning, in years to come we'd work together on hundreds of episodes of television, developing one series in particular that would forever change children's entertainment.

What I did know was that I liked Haim Saban...right from the start.

HOROSCOPE

JUNE 18-24, 2026

AS INTERPRETED BY SANDY "STAR" BENDT

ARIES MARCH 21—APRIL 19

The summer is here and the time is right for reconnecting with family. Take time to learn about the people in your family and what they were into. Perhaps, you are more similar than you realize to a family member which will help you feel more deeply connected and a more valuable part of the family.

TAURUS APRIL 20—MAY 20

Summer has arrived and it is time to resume conversations and interactions with people. There is an element of the past coming back for another go around but this time you will be more in tune with yourself and less likely to be taken advantage of. It is important to assert yourself but don't over do it.

GEMINI MAY 21—JUNE 21

It will be slow going this week as you will be redoing a lot of your previous work and reorganizing things you thought were well planned out. This is the time to double check details and have alternatives in place. Your intuitive senses will be spot on so, if you feel like it's not OK, trust it and make changes early.

CANCER JUNE 22—JULY 22

This summer is all about revamping your style and realigning your image to reflect a more friendlier and approachable vibe. You will be encountering a lot of different people over the next week that will open up possibilities to expand and grow your ideas. First impressions will be important.

LEO JULY 23—AUGUST 22

Summer is in full swing and it's a great time to relax and refresh your senses. Take time to pamper yourself and put your feet up. The energy now is all about slowing down and enjoying reconnecting with your inner world. If you feel restless and need to stay busy, dig out an old art project and get crafty.

VIRGO AUGUST 23—SEPTEMBER 22

Old friends and old flames will be making a presence this week as this is going to be the summer of returns. Somethings will be coming back just to leave again. So, take advantage of the time you have with them and let them know how you feel. This is your opportunity to finally share you side of the story.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23—OCTOBER 22

There will be some energy shifting within the company you work for or the way you approach your responsibilities. There could be a bit of a slow down and a return of certain procedures that may have caused problems in the past. Also, changes with coworkers may cause some drama.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23—NOVEMBER 21

As the summer unfolds, it's time to rethink the trajectory and path you are on. There will be an opportunity to change your career or get involved in a new venture but it is important to learn and investigate all you can before investing or buying things to secure a new position. Get ready but be frugal.

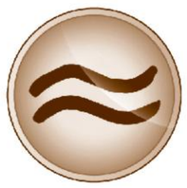
SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22—DECEMBER 21

It is important to rekindle family connections and obligations this week. If there are issues with a family member, situations will arise now that may force you to connect and converse with them. Don't let opportunities to bury the hatchet go. Make peace and renew connections with family.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22—JANUARY 19

This summer you can expect romance and a close partnership to return to your life. Previous people or the same type of relationship from the past will return. It is up to you to change the interaction and take charge of your reactions to the relationship so that the same problems don't arise.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20—FEBRUARY 18



There will be a lot of rethinking and reevaluating choices this week. Pull back and take time to really asses the situation or people you are connected with. There may be more going on than you realize and you may have to rethink some of the ideas and plans you have with them. Disappointment over dishonor.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19—MARCH 20

It's time to fall in love again and rekindle artistic endeavors. This summer is all about finding the things that make you happy again. Start painting and dancing again. Make your life have a great soundtrack by getting out there and grooving with the beats life throws at you. Love is in the air, breathe it in.

Always desire to learn something useful. — *Sophocles*

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Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.

				5				
			8					
8	4				2			1
7	8		3		4		2	
		2		1			6	
								7
2					3	1	7	6
	5		7					
		4					3	2

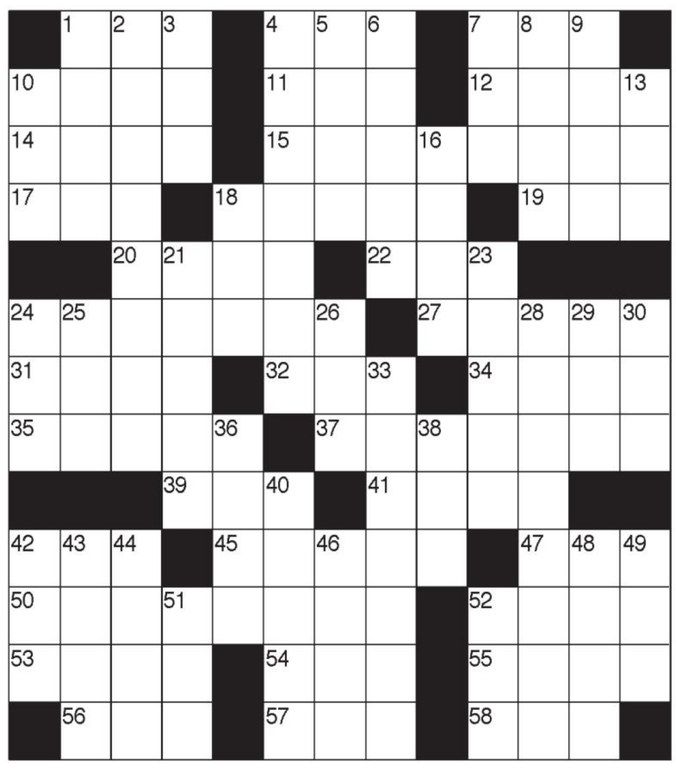
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

1 Federal Bureau of Investigation (abbr.)
4 Political action committee (abbr.)
7 Amer. Automobile Assn. (abbr.)
10 Soapstone
11 Wood sorrel
12 Action (suf.)
14 Animal teeth (suf.)
15 Threadlike
17 Female rabbit
18 Charger
19 Bird's display area
20 Betel leaf concoction
22 Moon vehicle (abbr.)
24 Hairdo
27 Called
31 Gentleman (Ger.)
32 Used to express negation
34 Hindu princess
35 The Buddha's birth country
37 One of the Seven Hills of Rome
39 Television channel
41 Care for
42 Environmental Protection Agency (abbr.)
45 Woman's work basket
47 Condition (suf.)
50 Cob (2 words)
52 Down with (Fr., 2 words)
53 Wound crust
54 Mother of Hezekia
55 Bleach
56 Poetic contraction
57 Nat'l Endowment for the Arts (abbr.)
58 Eastern church chalice veil

DOWN

1 Port. folk tune
2 Jay (2 words)
3 Science of (suf.)
4 Floating bridge
5 Afr. fruit
6 Ruminant
7 Mulberry of India
8 Indigo dye
9 Skin eruption
10 Fox (Scot.)
13 Mouse-spotter's cry
16 Arabian Sea gulf
18 With (pref.)
21 Finn. language
23 Sea (Fr.)
24 Greek letter
25 Partlet
26 Month abbr.
28 Jaw bone
29 Last Queen of Spain
30 Arabic letter
33 Moon of Uranus
36 First principles
38 Fr. pronoun
40 Hindu month
42 Ger. spa
43 Speed
44 Wings
46 Endearment
48 River into the Moselle
49 Compass direction
51 Compass direction
52 Braz. tree



OBITUARIES

Brian Jacob Adamec
1987-2026

Brian Jacob Adamec, 38, passed away on March 20, 2026 at his home in Buchanan MI.

Brian was born July 23, 1987 in Kalamazoo MI. He was the only son of Richard "Dick" and Jan Adamec. He grew up in New Buffalo, MI where he attended St Mary of the Lake Elementary School and New Buffalo Middle and High School. He was an outstanding athlete playing soccer, basketball, baseball and football. Many will remember him as the pitcher on the 2005 state championship baseball team. After high school he attended Central Michigan University and in spite of his favorite teacher at NBHS telling him that she would give him a Rolex if he graduated, he opted to find another path after 2 years at Central.

Brian enlisted in the U. S. Army as an infantryman in 2010 and served in active combat in Afghanistan and Kuwait. He developed a brotherhood with his comrades that only those who have served in active combat can understand. Those relationships were very important to him and he spoke compassionately about his brothers in arms. After 4 1/2 years as a highly decorated infantryman, he became a well respected Army recruiter earning more accolades as evidenced by the many awards that he received with humility during his tenure in Colorado Springs CO and Corpus Christi TX.

In 2011 he married Emily Jackson who remained his best friend and emotional support through many difficult times, including the death of his father while Brian was serving his country on a combat outpost in the Arghandab River Valley of Afghanistan in 2012, during the height of the war. They never stopped loving each other. Their three dogs, who Brian adored, are in Emily's loving care.

Brian served in the Army until 2019 when he and Emily moved from Texas to Colorado Springs, a place that held many wonderful memories for them. He enjoyed mountain biking and, as was his nature, he challenged the mountain trails and jumps, one time landing in the hospital with a few broken ribs and a punctured lung. A few days passed and he was back on the mountain trails, but with a chest protector. He played hard, but he played to win, always.

Brian found his sense of peace and treasured his time spent in nature. He enjoyed caddying at the Dunes Club during high school and for a short time after returning to MI and often spoke of the beauty of the course and the interesting people that he had met. He loved walking by the vineyards and orchards on the country roads aroundhis house and hiking the mountains of Colorado and Vermont. In 2018, he invited his mom to join him on a trip to Italy and they had a wonderful time hiking from town to town along the mountain trails of the Amalfi Coast, a memory she will cherish for the rest of her life.

Brian had a special connection with the many friends he had throughout his life. He was a hero to many and will be deeply missed by teammates, comrades, friends and family. He is survived by his mother, Jan and her friend Jim, his Aunt Cyn and Uncle Art, his Uncle Bruce and his cousins Tonya (husband Greg), Christopher, Gregory, Justin (wife Mary), and Quinton and Rochelle. His father, Dick, and cousin, Jeffrey, and Aunt "Mama Jo" welcomed him into Heaven.

There will be a celebration of life with full military honors at 1:00 pm on July 23, 2026 at the Sommerfeld Chapel, 15 N Barton St., New Buffalo, MI 49117.

After the service, please join us from 2pm-5pm to celebrate his life and share treasured memories at Skips Restaurant, 16710 Red Arrow Highway, New Buffalo, MI. Bring your favorite stories and photos.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made in his name to the Wounded Warrior Project. Feel free to donate on their website at www.woundedwarriorproject.org or a mailed in donation with checks payable to "Wounded Warrior Project" and mailed to Wounded Warrior Project at P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675.

Mary Gregory
1929-2025

Mary Gregory, 96, of Stevensville, died peacefully, Friday, December 26, 2025, in the presence of her family.

Her life began October 24, 1929 in Three Oaks, Michigan. Second child of two children born to Hazel and Guy McDonald. She married Herbert Flick in 1948 and he passed away March 1953. She married Frederick J. Gregory February 13, 1954 in New Buffalo, Michigan. After fifty-four years together, he preceded her in death.

Mary was the heart of her family and the reason we all gathered. We will always remember our parent's home being the place where holidays came alive, filled with warmth, laughter, shared meals, and maybe a little mischief from us kids but mostly the feeling that everyone belonged.

Mary will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by daughters, Mary Ann (Mike) Rublein of Fruitport, Pamela (Jeff) Busse of Three Oaks, sons, Rickey Flick of Three Oaks, David (Elizabeth) Flick of New Buffalo, James (Cathy) Gregory of Myrtle Beach SC; eleven grandchildren; Sixteen great grandchildren; Nine great-great grandchildren; three sister-in-laws and a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was preceded in death by her parents, Beloved first husband Herbert Flick and Frederick Gregory. Her brother Lyle McDonald.

Family and friends will gather for a graveside service at Lakeside Cemetery. Friday June 12, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. Mary will be laid to rest beside her husband in Lakeside Cemetery.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Mary be made to Hospice of Berrien County 4025 Health Park Lane, Saint Joseph, MI 49085.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Pobocik Chapel, Three Oaks. Please share a memory or a message online at www.wagnercares.com.

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WEEKLY | LIVE MUSIC | THREE OAKS, MI
From 6-8p ET, live music heads to Journeyman Distillery for select dates this summer.

WEDNESDAYS & FRIDAYS | SUMMER MUSIC LIVE | VALPARAISO, IN
Live music and good company come together under the open sky starting at 6:30p CT.

JUNE 19 | WINSTON A. FOX RELEASE DINNER WITH ST ELMO | VALPARAISO, IN
Join us for an unforgettable evening celebrating the hometown release of Winston A. Fox, a bold new rye whiskey inspired by the legendary fox mascot of St. Elmo Steak House.

JUNE 21 | FATHER'S DAY BRUNCH | THREE OAKS, MI & VALPARAISO, IN
Treat Dad to craft cocktails and a family brunch, starting at 10a (Local Time).

JUNE 28 | GREENS & SCREENS: CADDYSHACK, WITH VICKERS THEATER | THREE OAKS, MI
Tee up for a laid-back night of putting, pours, and laughs as we bring the green to life before a special screening of Caddyshack.

MONTHLY STARTING JUNE 28 | JAZZ SESSIONS | VALPARAISO, IN
A new intimate live music series celebrating some of the finest jazz artists from Northwest Indiana and Chicagoland.

JULY 11 | AMERICON | VALPARAISO, IN
CELEBRATE THE AMERICAN SPIRIT! A full day of homegrown fun bringing the neighborhood together in celebration of U.S. culture and our Midwest roots. Featuring *Small Town*—A John Mellencamp Experience, at 6:30p CT.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

VILLAGE OF GRAND BEACH
NOTICE OF TAXES

The 2026 Summer Taxes for the Village of Grand Beach are due and payable July 1, 2026 until September 14, 2026. Taxes are payable to the Village of Grand Beach, 48200 Perkins Blvd., Grand Beach, MI 49117, or may be dropped off in the outside drop box at the Village Hall.

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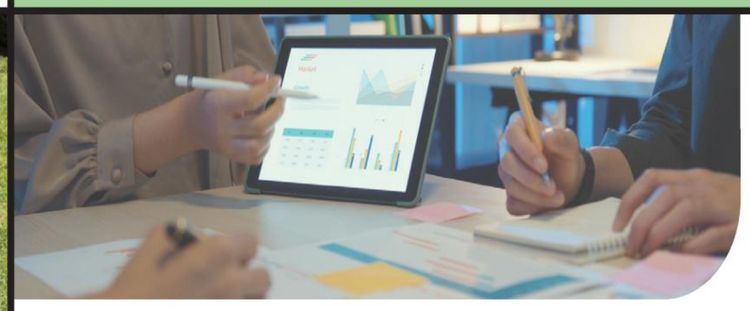

Preparing for Market Volatility
Markets Can Change Quickly
Consider protecting your gains with a strategy that aims to:

- Capture growth potential
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To Your Health

COLUMN BY KAREN EDWARDS ND

THE HEALING POWER OF FOREST BATHING

Has your doctor ever written you this prescription? 'Spend more time in the woods.'

There is a real science behind forest bathing and why spending just 15 minutes in nature drastically reduces cortisol levels.

Spending time under a canopy of trees can quickly clear a heavy mind. It is a scientifically validated method of preventative medicine. When we step off the asphalt and into living trees, physical changes take place inside us, giving our health a total reboot.

There is a known chemical secret. At the heart of the woods healing power is an invisible exchange between plants and humans. Trees release antimicrobial compounds called phytoncides to defend themselves against insects and disease. When humans inhale these airborne chemicals, our immune systems respond. Research shows that exposure to phytoncides boosts the count and activity of Natural Killer (NK) cells. These are an important type of white blood cells responsible for hunting down viruses and other diseased cells.

Studies have shown that even a weekend in a wooded environment can elevate this immune-boosting NK cell activity for up to 30 days afterward. This is why you feel so good after a camping trip in the woods. It is also why people want to leave the cities and move into a country area. They may not know it, but their instincts are drawing them to nature.

Modern life keeps our bodies trapped in a chronic state of survival, controlled by the sympathetic nervous system. This is the "fight-or-flight" response. Forest bathing is likea physical brake, shifting into the parasympathetic nervous system, known as the "rest-and-digest" state.

Within a short time of sitting or walking in a green space, our cortisol stress hormone drops drastically. Bloodpressure lowers, and heart rate improves. This shift signals to the brain that it is safe, allowing the body to redirect energy toward deep cellular repair, digestion and inflammation.

It also helps decrease activity in the prefrontal cortex.This is where that exhausting, repetitive loop of thoughts and worry that drives anxiety lives. It can also break the cycle of mental fatigue and restores our attention.

Look at parks in the summer. They are full of people drawn to the magical healing power of trees. I find my best writing and creative flow while walking and sitting amongst the trees.

To enjoy the therapeutic benefits of forest bathing, leave the smartphones behind. There is a saying that there is no wifi in the forest, but you will find the best connection.

Find a few trees. Walk or sit with them. Engage all ofyour senses. Feel the rough texture of the bark. Breathe deeply and smell the earthy scent of the soil where the phytoncides live. This medicinal dose of just 15 minutes is all it takes to shift your biochemistry. Hugging a tree is not so silly anymore, is it? Nature is an essential nutrient for human wellness. Take a walk in the woods, or sit against a tree and let it pour its medicine into you.

Disclaimer: Everything here is for nutritional education and is not meant to diagnose, treat prevent or cure. See your doctor when you have questions.

PET OF THE WEEK

ALICE

"Alice doesn't live here anymore." Sadly, her previous owner passed away, but Alice wants to live with you. Weighing in at almost 12 pounds, she is almost four years old, spayed, and just wants your love. Alice does like to make a space of her own, whether it be alone or on you. Alice, of course, is infatuated with treats. She has lived in a home with other cats, so hopefully it's a win-win for the whole home. Take time, she's adjusting, but once you make a connection, she'd like a nice, warm chin scratch. Make Alice part of your home today.

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Gary Wood thanks the trails' supporters

Marcy Hamilton and Gary Wood admire Wood's plaque at the trailhead

New Buffalo Mayor Vance Price speaks on the trails' impact

Friends of Berrien County Trails President Beat Stocker introduces the campaign

Friends of Berrien County Trails launches 'Big Idea' Honors longtime trail visionary Wood

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

A countywide campaign to connect 100 miles of trails across Berrien County was launched at the Marquette Greenway Trailhead at Mechanic and Smith streets in New Buffalo Wednesday, June 10, by Friends of Berrien County Trails.

Called The Big Idea, the campaign, per the Friends' website, will create "a connected county where trails link communities, waterfronts, downtowns, and natural spaces from New Buffalo to St. Joseph and beyond."

The public, partners and donors can view completed, in-progress, and planned trail projects on a new website, berrientrails.org.

Eight regionally significant routes form the "spine" of the proposed network, connecting to neighboring counties and states:" Marquette Greenway, Red Arrow Trail, Lakeshore Trail, Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail, McCoy Creek Trail, Old Sauk Trail, M140 and Territorial/Red Arrow Highway.

Beat Stocker, president of Friends of Berrien County Trails, said the trail connections are "really important about uniting our communities, providing safe passageways for our cities, our visitors, it's about economic development."

"It's really about connecting the communities - you can see as you go up Red Arrow Trail and really start to see how that vision comes to life as you see these smaller communities all connected by trails that we can enjoy," he said.

A plaque honoring Gary Wood, a founding president of Friends of Berrien County Trails and a key visionary behind the long-term trail connectivity work that helped lead to The Big Idea, was unveiled at the trailhead.

Stocker said they were honoring Wood for being a "tireless trail advocate and connecting likeminded people, donors and advocates and really making these projects happen behind the scenes."

"He doesn't just talk about them, but he rolls up his sleeves and gets work done," he said.

New Buffalo Mayor Vance Price said trails "do so much more than connect Point A to Point B – they contribute significantly to our communities' overall quality of life, our safety and economic vitality."

"We see firsthand with Marquette Greenway actually helping to connect New Buffalo to our neighboring communities and plugging us into a much larger, regional trail system," he said.

He called Wood someone who's "dedicated to making the city and this area better for visitors, better for the community and all that hard work they do."

Darwin Watson, Vance Price, Bob Clark, Gary Wood and Michelle Heit hold a ceremonial check of $440,000, which the Friends raised for Marquette Greenway's Phase One

Before being formalized in the Berrien County Trails Master Plan, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission Senior Planner/Deputy Executive Director Marcy Hamiliton said the "The Big Idea" was set forth in the Berrien County Recreational Plan.

"We want to connect our downtowns, our waterfront, our parks, our natural areas - everything that's wonderful that we love about this place, we want to connect it with trails," she said.

"Gary's 'Big Idea' will continue to inspire every mile of trail built to connect people and places" is engraved on the plaque.

Wood thanked Hamilton for "carrying the torch for hike, bike and water trails in the region for over 20 years," Friends of Berrien County Trails Board and Marquette Greenway Fundraising Committee and his wife, Leslie, who has "partnered with me giving back for over 55 years.

"My name may be on this plaque, but this trailhead was built by 1,000 hands: the city, the township, the county, our funders and every volunteer who showed up rain or shine," he said.

"We don't measure our progress in miles of pavement - we measure it in miles of connection: That's the big idea, and we're just getting started."

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